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DANTE'S REFERENCES TO AESOP.

No entirely satisfactory account has yet been published of Dante's references to Aesop (*Inferno*, xxiii, 4; *Convito*, iv, 30). This is owing to the fact that in treating the subject sufficient consideration has not been given to mediæval as contrasted with ancient fable literature. It is less important to know what answers modern scholarship gives to questions concerning the identity and the works of Aesop—and these answers are still far from complete—than to remember what Dante and his contemporaries meant when they spoke of "Aesop's fables." It will be well, then, to begin by recalling some features of the history of fables from the classical period to the fourteenth century.

In the first place, it must not be forgotten that in mediæval Italy Greek literature was little known except as it had taken a Latin form. The Greek fables, on account of the important part they played in ancient education, had early become a familiar element in popular tradition; as literature, however, they were transmitted almost exclusively through the Latin of Phaedrus,¹ who in the prologue to his first book mentions his source in these words:

Aesopus auctor quam materiam repperit,
Hanc ego polivi versibus senariis.

During the Middle Ages, however, the fables of Phaedrus were known only through the prose paraphrase of a writer of the Carolingian period, who calls himself Romulus, and who in his prologue ascribes the book to "Aesopus, homo Grecus," but claims the honor

¹ *Phaedri Fabularum Aesopiarum Libri*, ed. Müller, Leipzig, 1877; Hervieux, *Les Fabulistes Latins*, I, II (2^e éd.), Paris, 1893-94. We may disregard the fables of Avianus, which in the Middle Ages usually formed a collection by themselves, or else, as was often the case, were ascribed to Aesop.

of having translated it: *Id ego Romulus transtuli de greco in latinum*.¹ Even the name of Phaedrus was lost, and the innumerable versions derived from him through Romulus bear in some form the name Aesop. Thus to the mediæval as to the ancient mind, all fables were Aesop's fables. Denoting as it did a certain kind of literature, his name was applied even to collections like the twelfth century French one of Marie de France, which contained also purely mediæval material. "Apparently Aesop never wrote such a fable," says Dr. Moore,² commenting on *Inferno*, xxiii, 4. But what collection of so-called Aesopic fables did Dante have in mind? This is a question of interest, whether that particular fable was or was not originally written by the somewhat mysterious Phrygian.

Of the two references by Dante to Aesop, that in the *Convito* (iv, 30) is as follows:

È da notare che, siccome dice nostro Signore, non si deono le margarite gittare innanzi ai porci; perocchè a loro non è prode, e alle margarite è danno; e, come dice Esopo poeta nella prima Favola, più è prode al gallo un granello di grano, che una margarita; e però questa lascia, e quello ricoglie.³

Now the fable of the Cock and the Pearl does not occur at all in Greek, and no source has been found earlier than Phaedrus, in whose collection it is the twelfth of the third book. It is the first, however, in Romulus and in nearly all his derivatives.⁴ Romulus, closely following Phædrus, gives it as follows:

In sterquilinio quidam gallinacius dum querit æscam invenit margaritam in indigno loco iacentem. Quam ut vidit, sic ait: Bona res, in stercore iaces. Te si cupidus invenisset, quo gaudio rapuisset, ut redires ad splendorem pristinum decoris tui. Ego te inveni in hoc loco iacentem; potius mihi escam quero. Nec tibi ego prosum nec tu mihi. Hec illis aescopus narrat qui non intelligunt.

¹ See Oesterley, *Romulus*, Berlin, 1870; Hervieux, *op. cit.*

² *Studies in Dante*, Oxford, 1896, p. 16.

³ *Opere di Dante*, ed. Moore, Oxford, 1894. In his *Studies in Dante*, p. 294, Dr. Moore says: "The well-known first fable is at once recognized"; but he does not state of what collection it is the first. Cf. Toynbee, *Dante Dictionary*, s. v. *Esopo*: "The fable of the Cock and the Pearl, which D. calls 'la prima favola.'"

⁴ Cf. E. du Ménil, *Poésies Inédites du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1854, p. 90, note 4.

In most of the direct derivatives the wording is nearly the same.¹ There is a difference of some importance, however, in one of them,—the collection of fables in elegiac distichs, written probably in the twelfth century, published many times before 1500, and commonly called, after Névelet, who edited it in 1610, the *Anonymus Neveleti* (now ascribed to one Walter of England and to various others). This reads as follows :

Dum rigido fodit ore fimum, dum queritat escam,
Dum stupet inventa iaspide gallus, ait :
Res vili preciosa loco natique nitoris,
Hac in sorde iacens nil mihi messis habes, etc.²

Since this last was the most widely known fable-book of the Middle Ages, we should expect Dante to have been familiar with it, and his phrase *Esopo poeta* seems to indicate that he at least knew some metrical version ; yet since he uses the somewhat rare word *margarita*,³ and not one corresponding to *iaspide*, it seems likely that he had here the version of Romulus in mind. Perhaps he knew both Romulus and Anon. Nev., and quoting from memory combined the two ; or, he may have been influenced in his choice of words by the verse of the Bible to which he refers. This reads in the Vulgate (Matt. VII, 6) :

Nolite dare sanctum canibus : neque mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos, ne forte conculcent eas pedibus suis, et conversi dirumpant vos.

In the case of some fables—the one to be mentioned presently,

¹ Text of Romulus in Oesterley, *op. cit.*, and Hervieux, *op. cit.*, II, 195 ; text of various derivatives in Hervieux, *ibid.*, pp. 246, 262, 418, 461, 474, 513 (Romulus Nilantii), 564 (so-called LBG—a fable-collection represented by MSS. at London, Brussels, Berlin, Göttingen, and Trèves—on which see works by Mall and Warnke, cited below). Text of other early derivatives directly from Phaedrus, *ibid.*, pp. 131, 190.

² Hervieux, *op. cit.*, II, 316 ; Foerster, *Lyoner Ysopet . . . mit dem kritischen Text des Lat. Originals* (sog. *Anon. Nev.*), Heilbronn, 1882, p. 96.

³ Cf. *Par.*, ii, 34 *l'eterna margarita* (the moon ; so in the sonnet *Chi guarderà giammai*, p. 172, *Opere*, ed. Moore) ; *Par.*, vi, 127 *la presente margarita* (planet Mercury) ; *Par.*, xxii, 29 *margarite* (spirits). Scartazzini and others spell it *margherita*, and in this form Petrocchi, *Dizionario*, gives it as *termine letterario* for *perla*, mentioning the proverbial expression *le margherite davanti a' porci* ; *margarita*, which appears to be a Latinism, he gives as meaning a mineral (perhaps the same as Eng. *margarite*).

for instance — the question might arise whether a writer of the fourteenth century knew them from a book of the Phaedrus-Romulus family, or from popular tradition. In this case, however, we cannot doubt that Dante had in mind some book in which the fable came first; and from his words it would appear that in this book the fables were in verse, and that the word *margarita* was used in the first of them. Neither the Romulus nor the Anon. Nev. exactly fulfills these conditions, yet probability points on the whole to the combination of the two, as the Romulus is the best known of the versions containing the word *margarita* in this fable.

It may be urged, however, that some other mediæval collection of fables may have been Dante's source. Mr. Paget Toynbee, for example, has hinted at a possible influence of Marie de France for the explanation of the fable we have still to consider.¹ It seems well, therefore, to say a few words about the peculiarities of such collections as might possibly be brought into this connection. Other mediæval and later versions of the fable very frequently have the *precious stone*, going back to the Anonymus Neveleti, while some have the *pearl* of Romulus. Marie de France, whose source was an English collection, now lost, derived in part from the Romulus Nilantii (so-called from Nilant, who published it in 1709), has *une chiere gemme* (fable 1); this seems to suggest the influence of the Anon. Nev.² The old Italian versions, which are prose translations from the Anon. Nev. and from Marie de France, have *una pietra preziosa*;³ thus, even if

¹ *Dante Dictionary*, s. v. *Esopo*.

² According to Mall (in *Zeitschrift f. rom. Phil.*, IX (1885), 181, 200) the change from the words of Romulus must have been due to the writer of the lost English collection, who, however, was not likely to have known the Anon. Nev. The change may have arisen in the translating through English into French. The rest of Marie's fable, especially the lines *S'uns riches huom ci vus trovast | bien sai que d'or vus honurast*, suggests Rom. much more than Anon. Nev. Text of Marie in: *Die Fabeln der Marie de France*, hrsg. von K. Warnke, Halle, 1898.

³ Versions from Anon. Nev.: *Esopo volgarizzato per uno da Siena*, ed. Berti, Padova, 1811; *Favole d' Esopo volgarizzate*, Firenze, 1864 (several MSS. and various editions of this translation); *Il Volgarizzamento delle Favole di Galfredo, dette di Esopo*, ed. Ghivizzani, Bologna, 1866. From Marie: *Volgarizzamento delle Favole di Esopo*, ed. Rigoli, Firenze, 1818 (cf. Warnke, *Fabeln der Marie*, pp. lxxiv ff.). In all these collections also the fable is the first. Another MS. of the translation from Marie was published at Lucca in 1864.

old enough to have been known to Dante, they did not influence his conception of the fable.

The intrinsic interest of the subject will perhaps justify a few words more about the history of this fable. Various Latin versions were derived from one or other of the sources just mentioned, including one by Jacques de Vitry.¹ The Hebrew version of Berachyah ha-Nakdan very closely resembles that of Marie de France.² Ulrich Boner's *Edelstein*, the popularity of which is indicated by the fact that it was the first book printed in German, is a fourteenth century translation from the Anon. Nev.; it received its name from the first fable.³ In Heinrich Steinhöwel's *Aesop* (about 1480), of which the first four books are from Romulus, the first fable is *Von dem han und dem bernlin*; and this version is the source of various others, including Caxton's and Martin Luther's.⁴ La Fontaine also shows the influence of Romulus in his fable (i, 20), *Le Coq et la Perle*. While, as we have seen, no other source than Phaedrus can be pointed out, it is interesting to compare the words of the New Testament which Dante quotes, and also the following Oriental tale from Saadi's *Rose Garden*:⁵ A traveller, lost in the desert and without provisions, comes upon a bag in which he hopes to find wheat; and he is bitterly disappointed on discovering that it contains pearls.

¹ *The Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. Crane, London, 1890, p. 21; Hervieux, *op. cit.*, II, 383, 654, 714; *Fabularum quae hoc libro continentur . . . Goudanus, etc.*, Argentorati, 1518, first fable (cf. Braune, *Die Fabeln des Erasmus Alberus* (1550), Halle, 1892, pp. xxix ff.); *Fabulae Aesopicae . . . Camerarii*, Lugduni, 1571, no. 188.

² *Parabolae Vulpium Rabbi Barachiae Nikdani*, trans. by Hanel, Pragmae, 1661, no. 4, p. 19. This fable supports what Warnke says, *op. cit.*, pp. lxxviii ff., about the collection of Berachyah having been influenced by Marie.

³ First edition printed at Bamberg in 1461 (see R. C. Hawkins, *Titles of the First Books from the Earliest Presses*, New York, 1884); also published by Pfeiffer, Leipzig, 1844.

⁴ *Steinhöwels Aesop*, hrsg. von Oesterley, Stuttgart, 1873 (cf. Keidel in *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XI, 46); Jacobs, *The Fables of Aesop as first printed by Caxton in 1484*, London, 1889; *Luthers Fabeln*, hrsg. von Thiele, Halle, 1888.

⁵ *The Gulistan or Rose Garden by Musle-Huddeen Sheik Saadi*, trans. by F. Gladwin, Boston, 1865, chap. iii, tale 17, p. 231; *Sadi's Rosengarten*, hrsg. von Graf, Leipzig, 1846, p. 107.

The other passage in which Dante speaks of Aesop is as follows (*Inf.*, xxiii, 4-9):

Volto era in sulla favola di Isopo
 Lo mio pensier per la presente rissa,
 Dov' ei parlò della rana e del topo:
 Chè più non si pareggia mo ed issa,
 Che l' un con l' altro fa, se ben s'accoppia
 Principio e fine con la mente fissa.

In both Romulus and the Anon. Nev. the fable is the third, and in Romulus it runs as follows:

Mus cum transire vellet flumen, a rana petiit auxilium. Illa grossum petiit linum, murem sibi ad pedem ligavit, et natare coepit. In medio vero flumine rana se in deorsum mersit, ut miserrimo vitam eriperet. Ille validus dum teneret vires, milvus e contra volans murem cum unguibus rapuit, simul et ranam pendentem sustulit. Sic enim et illis contingit qui de salute alterius adversa cogitant.

In the Anon. Nev. the ideas are the same, though the wording is different; the strife is dwelt upon more than in Romulus:

Muris iter rumpente lacu venit obvia muri
 Rana loquax et opem pacta nocere cupit . . .
 Pes coit ergo pedi, sed mens a mente recedit.
 Ecce natant. Trahitur ille, sed illa trahit . . .
 Rana studet mergi, sed mus emergit et obstat
 Naufragio. Vires suggerit ipse timor. . . .

Either of these versions seems to contain all that is needed for Dante's comparison.

While not contained in the text of Phaedrus that has come down to us, this fable was probably in his collection, for it is found not only in Romulus but in two other mediæval collections which are independent of Romulus, but likewise derived in the main directly from Phaedrus.¹ But this fable, unlike the Cock and the Pearl, is found in Greek versions, which, though they may not in their present

¹ *Fabulae Antiquae* ascribed to Ademar Cabannensis (formerly called *Anonymus Nilantii*), no. 4; *Magistro Rufo Aesopus* (Wolfenbüttel MS., formerly Weissenburg), no. 3. See Hervieux, *op. cit.*, I, 241-324; II, 132, 159; Jacobs, *op. cit.*, I, 5-14; Havet, *Revue Critique*, XXXI (1897), 311 ff.

form be nearly so old as Phaedrus, yet show that the fable belonged to the Greek tradition. Of these, the one published by Nevelet in 1610, and republished by Furia, Coray, and Halm,¹ differs little from the version of Romulus. A mouse and a frog make friends, tie themselves together by the feet, and go about the fields seeking food; when they reach a pond, the treacherous frog plunges to the bottom, croaking with joy. The mouse drowns, comes to the surface, and is carried off by a kite (*ικτῖνος*) together with the frog. Again, in the *Life of Aesop* ascribed to the Byzantine monk Maximus Planudes,² the fable is told by Aesop when his life is threatened by the Delphians. Here the frog, after dining with the mouse, invites the latter to return the visit; they tie themselves together and jump into the pond. The mouse is drowned, but not before it has declared that it will be avenged; and in this case they are both eaten by the eagle. In conclusion, Aesop declares that he likewise will be avenged.

Whatever may be the origin of this fable, it is Aesopic in a general sense. Aesop himself seems to have left no writings whatever, and we are in no position to determine which of the fables now existing in Greek versions he composed and transmitted to oral tradition; the most that we can say about any fable is that it was mentioned as his in ancient Greek literature, and we can say this of very few.³ This particular fable does not happen to occur in our present text of Babrius or of Phaedrus. Nevertheless, as we have seen, it was probably in Phaedrus originally; and the Greek versions, as well as the assumed version of Phaedrus, may come from a much older original.

The early commentator of the Divine Comedy, Benvenuto,⁴ says: "Fuit enim Aesopus antiquus poeta asianus, qui egregie finxit fabu-

¹ Furia, *Fabulae Aesopicae*, Lipsiae, 1810, no. 307; Coray's edition, Paris, 1810, no. 245; Halm, *Fabulae Aesopicae*, Lipsiae, 1881 (1st ed. 1852), no. 298.

² Printed in the *edit. prin.* of the Greek fables (about 1480) and often thereafter. I have it before me in the Froben edition, Basel, 1530, p. 94. If Planudes (*circa* 1260-1310) wrote it, he had a much older model; it was long a favorite *Volksbuch*. See Krumbacher, *Geschichte der Byzantinischen Litteratur*, 2te Aufl., München, 1897, pp. 543, 897; Gaster, *Greeko-Slavonic Lit. and its Relation to Folklore*, London, 1887, pp. 112 ff.

³ According to Jacobs, *op. cit.*, I, 24-42, only about twenty.

⁴ *Benvenuti de Rambaldi de Imola Comentum*, Florentiae, 1887, ii, 156 (*Inf.* xxiii, 4).

las . . . et graece scripsit magnum opus ex quo defloratus fuit iste parvus libellus quo latini utuntur, in quo inter alios apologos ponitur iste de rana et mure." The contemporary commentary by Buti¹ says: "Isopo è uno libello che si legge a' fanciulli che imparano Grammatica, ove sono certe favole moralizzate per arrearli a buoni costumi." Very little later than these is the *Commento d' Anonimo Fiorentino*,² which says: "Isopo fu uno poeta d' Asia antichissimo inanzi al tempo d' Aristotele, et fece uno grande et uno bello libro che si chiamò Isopo, et è in grammatica greca. È vero che questo Isopetto, che è in lingua latina, fue tratto da quello certi fioretti come piacque allo scrittore. È adunque nella terza sua favola di questo Isopo, che comincia *Muris iter rumpente lacu, etc.*, che la rana" The line quoted is, as we have seen, the first of the third fable in the Anon. Nev., and this is undoubtedly the *parvus libellus* of Benvenuto, and probably also the *Isopo* of Buti.

Now, the Greek versions and Phaedrus are important in determining the original source and the history of mediæval fables; but it is surprising to find modern commentators speaking of them as having any immediate and direct connection with Dante. The older commentators were more accurate, if their comments are rightly understood. Dean Plumtre³ shows needless distrust when he says: "The fable had *probably* found its way into a Latin reading book of the 13th century." Mr. Paget Toynbee, in his new and very valuable *Dictionary*⁴ speaks of the versions of Vincent de Beauvais (*Speculum Hist.*; it occurs also in the *Sp. Doct.*) and Marie de France, but without stating that they are derived from Romulus. He quotes from Benvenuto and from Buti, and adds: "A Tuscan version (Cent. xiv) of the 'Fables of Aesop,' representing apparently the book referred to by Buti, was published at Florence by Manni in 1778." It is true that in some points Buti's version of the fable suggests this Tuscan translation of the Anon. Nev. rather than the

¹ *Commento di Francesco da Buti*, ed. Giannini, Pisa, 1858.

² Ed. Fanfani, Bologna, 1866. On these commentaries cf. Scartazzini, *Dante-Handbuch*, Leipzig, 1892, pp. 466-473.

³ *The Commedia and Canzoniere of Dante*, London, 1886.

⁴ *A Dictionary of Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante*, Oxford, 1898, s. v. *Esopo* and in Addenda.

Latin original, and possibly he was familiar with it.¹ Buti may have made his own translation or adaptation from the Latin; and, moreover, when he says *Grammatica* I believe that he means Latin,² and hence I conclude that, like Benvenuto and the Anonimo Fiorentino, he refers to the Anon. Nev.³ Mr. Toynbee suggests further that Dante may have followed a version of the Marie de France group. Marie wrote before 1200, and her fables became widely known; we have several manuscripts of an early Italian translation,⁴ beside other collections influenced by her. The source of this group of versions is the Romulus Nilantii,⁵ in which there are some slight changes from the original Romulus,—the frog ties a cord to his own foot, but around the neck of the mouse; the mouse is not drowned, but both are carried off by the kite. Marie⁶ makes a

¹ The Cod. Farsetti published by Manni is supposed to be derived from one of the MSS. published respectively by Berti, *Esopo vulgarizzato per uno da Siena*, Padova, 1811, and by Le Monnier, *Favole d'Esopo volg. p. uno da Siena*, Firenze, 1864. See Ghivizzani, *op. cit.* (another translation of the Anon. Nev.), pp. xcvi ff., clxi ff. The Anon. Nev. mentions but one frog, while the Cod. Laur., ed. Le Monnier, says: "Il Topo . . . pervenne a uno fiume, nel quale aveva molte Ranocchie." Buti: "Lo topo . . . pervenne a una fossa d'acqua ov' erano molti ranocchi." It is to be noticed, however, that the word for *frog* is of different gender in the two versions; and other differences are more striking than the points of similarity. Both in Latin and in Italian the fables are *moralizzate*; the Anon. Nev. is often called *Esopus moralisatus*.

² Cf. title of the fables published by Rigoli in 1818: "Questo libro si chiama Isopo delle Favole, traslatato di Grammatica in Volgare." As Warnke says (*op. cit.*, p. lxxvi), this implies that the book was translated from Latin, though as a matter of fact it was from the French of Marie.

³ J. de Serravalle, *Comentum*, Prati, 1891 (written in 1416); Landino, *Comento*, Vinegio, 1484; Bern. Daniello da Lucca, Venetia, 1568; and the *Ottimo Comento*, ed. Torri, Pisa, 1827, seem to refer to the Latin version rather than to the Italian. Stefano Talice da Ricaldone, *Comento*, ed. Promis e Negroni, Milano, 1888, says: "Esopus . . . fecit magnum volumen; et de ipso extractus est ille libellus qui dicitur Esopus," i.e. evidently Anon. Nev. Jacopo della Lana, *Comento*, Venice, 1477 (and ed. Scarabelli, Bologna, 1866), gives a long version with curious additions of his own.

⁴ Beside the two published MSS. already mentioned, Ghivizzani (*op. cit.*, p. clxviii) describes a third.

⁵ No. 3; see Hervieux, *op. cit.*, II, 514.

⁶ No. 3. This version suggests the fable of the Town-Mouse and the Country Mouse, Halm, 297; Babrius, 108; Romulus, I, 12; Anon. Nev., 12; Marie, 9.

longer story: the frog sees the mouse sitting at the door of a mill, asks if it is her house, and is invited to visit her. They enjoy the provisions, but the frog desires more water, and with evil intent proposes that the mouse return the visit. When they reach the river the frog ties her own leg to the leg of the timid mouse, and then plunges under water; the cries of the mouse are heard by the kite (*escufte*), which devours the frog, but lets the mouse go. The Italian versions¹ have a few minor changes, but in them also the mouse escapes. The Hebrew version of Berachyah² is still longer, but keeps close to Marie. The so-called LBG³ follows Marie in the main, but in some details the Romulus Nilantii as opposed to Marie; it agrees with Berachyah in substituting the eagle for the kite. I see no conclusive reason, however, for assuming that Dante knew any of these versions, or others that might be mentioned.⁴ The Anonimo Fiorentino certainly, and the other old commentators probably, supposed that he referred to the Anon. Nev. when he said 'Isopo';⁵ and in this opinion they were probably correct, though, as we have seen, it is likely that he knew Romulus also. The elaborated version of the fable given by Jacopo della Lana does not go against this theory, for no known version seems more likely to have been its source than the Anon. Nev.⁶

¹ Ed. Rigoli, no. 14; Cod. Pal. (Lucca, 1864), no. 12.

² Ed. Hanel, no. 2, p. 7.

³ No. 3, in Hervieux, II, 565. As in Rom. Nil., the frog ties its foot to the neck of the mouse, and the latter does not escape.

⁴ The version in the *Dialogus Creaturarum* (Grässe, *Die beiden ältesten Fabelbücher des Mittelalters*, Tübingen, 1880, no. 107) follows the Anon. Nev. and quotes two lines from it *verbatim*. Alexander Neckam, no. 6, follows Romulus (Hervieux, II, 395). Kirchhof's *Wendunmuth* (ed. Oesterley, VII, 71) suggests somewhat the version in the *Life of Aesop*. The version by Odo of Cheriton (Hervieux, *op. cit.*, prem. éd., 1884, II, 638) is very short, and does not ascribe motives of treachery to the frog; and the same is true of that by Jacques de Vitry (ed. Crane, no. 3, p. 1).

⁵ It is worth noting that in the passage from the *Convito* discussed above the form *Esopo* seems to have been used by Dante. The reading *Isopo*, which is apparently established for the present passage, may make it look possible that Dante had here in mind some collection of fables in an Italian translation; but this conclusion is by no means necessary.

⁶ Jacopo says: "Pone Esopo che uno topo overo sorigo andava in uno suo viaggio. Quando elli fue ad una parte della sua via trovò uno fossato, etc."

In regard to the age of this fable it is significant to find that the Greek *Batrachomyomachia*, a burlesque epic describing the war of the frogs and the mice, begins with a similar tale. The mouse Psicharpax, being invited to visit the frog Physignathus, at first hesitates to enter the water, but finally mounts upon the back of the frog, holding him around the neck. Soon after they have entered the water a water snake appears, and the terrified frog dives; the mouse drowns, after calling for vengeance. This poem, long ascribed to Homer, is by many scholars assigned to a certain Pigres, of the fifth century B.C.; while by others it is put in the Alexandrian period.¹ It is perhaps impossible to decide whether the author of the poem made use of a fable already current, from which came the Greek and Latin versions that we know, or whether the fable had its origin in the poem.² At any rate, there seems to be some connection. In the Orient also we find tales which have a certain similarity. In the *Anvar-i Suhaili* a friendly tortoise carries a scorpion across a river; the scorpion stings the tortoise, which reflects that to cherish a base friend is to sacrifice oneself. This tale was put in the place of another that appears in the *Panchatantra*; and Benfey suggests that it may have been influenced by the Aesopic fable of the Frog and the Mouse.³ In Talmudic literature there are accounts of a scorpion crossing a river on the back of a frog in order to sting a man resting on the other side.⁴ In this connection it is of interest to remember that parts of the *Life of Aesop* may have come from Hebrew sources.⁵

¹ As *Homeri Ranarum et Murium Pugna* it was often printed in Greek and in Latin, with Aesop's fables, e.g., *Aesopi Phrygis Fabellae cum aliis opusculis*, Basileae, 1530, p. 264. W. Christ, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur*, Nördlingen, 1889 (Müller's *Handbuch*, VII), p. 56, and Ludwig, *Die Homerische Batrachomyomachia*, Leipzig, 1896, pp. 14-27, assign it to the fifth century. Van Herwerden in *Mnemosyne*, X, 163 ff.; Sittl, *Geschichte der griech. Lit.*, München, 1884-87, I, 151; III, 21, note; and Croiset, *Histoire de la litt. grecque*, Paris, 1896, I, 562 f., argue for the Alexandrian period.

² Both theories have been advanced; see Ludwig, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-37.

³ Eastwick, *Anvar-i Suhaili, or the Lights of Canopus*, Hertford, 1854, p. 133; Benfey, *Pantschatantra*, Leipzig, 1859, I, 223; Gaster, *Beiträge zur vergl. Sagen- und Märchenkunde*, Bukarest, 1883, p. 62.

⁴ W. Bacher, *Die Agada der babylonischen Amoräer*, Strassburg, 1878, pp. 41 f. Cf. Gaster, *l. c.*; Jacobs, *op. cit.*, I, 111.

⁵ See references above, concerning the *Life*.

These are hardly sufficient grounds, however, for assuming other than a Greek origin for our fable. On the history of the fable since Dante we have no occasion to dwell, further than to note that it occurs in numerous versions, derived from one or another of those already mentioned.¹ La Fontaine (iv, 11, and in his translation of the *Life*) knew the Greek version.

The commentators have devoted considerable attention to Dante's application of the fable. Benvenuto says: "Sed dices forsan, lector, nescio per me videre quomodo istae duae fictiones habeant inter se tantam convenientiam. . . . Ad quod respondeo quod passus vere est fortis." One commentator, Castelvetro (sixteenth century), sees no application.² The situation as it is described in *Inf.*, xxii is as follows: The barrator Ciampolo of Navarre, pretending that he will induce some Italians to come out from the boiling pitch, but in reality purposing to jump back unmolested himself, persuades the demons to withdraw a little. He jumps, and the demon Alichino tries in vain to catch him. Calcabrina scuffles with Alichino, and they fall together into the pitch, where the heat ungrapples them; Barbariccia then has them pulled out. There is here, in the first place, a superficial but striking similarity to the fable; like the frog and the mouse, the two demons, after being fastened together in the pool, are fished out together. Dante has already (xxii, 26-33) compared the sinners in the pitch to frogs in water. The barrator he has called a mouse (xxii, 58), but this comparison I do not believe was in his mind when he thought of the fable. When he says (xxiii, 5) *la presente rissa*, he means simply the scuffle between the two demons, disregarding the original cause, Ciampolo. As in the beginning (*principio*, xxiii, 9) the frog deceitfully proposes to aid the mouse, so Calcabrina pretends to aid Alichino, but in reality wishes a quarrel (*per aver la zuffa*, xxii, 135). As at the

¹ Goudanus, in his Latin prose arrangement of the Anon. Nev., has considerably changed the third fable; see edition already cited, and Braune, *Fab. des Alberus*, pp. xlii, xlv. This version is apparently the source of the fable by Sir Roger L'Estrange, quoted by Longfellow in the Notes to his translation of the *Divine Comedy*.

² *Sposizione di L. Castelvetro*, ed. G. Franciosi, Modena, 1886: "A me pare, considerando la favola d' Isopo e la presente rissa, non vedere cose che abbiano meno da fare insieme, e che sieno meno simili tra sè di queste."

end of the fable the frog as well as the mouse, the deceiver and the deceived, come to grief through the kite, so both the demons fall into the pitch. This in general is the interpretation given by Benvenuto, Buti, Jacopo della Lana, Serravalle, the Ottimo, Landino, and most of the modern editors. Benvenuto and Serravalle go further and compare Barbariccia to the kite in the fable; but obviously if we carry the comparison so far as this, we cannot say that it is as close as *mo* and *issa*.¹ Serravalle goes still further, and finds a symbolic meaning in the whole. The Anonimo Fiorentino gives a different turn to the comparison, making Ciampolo, the deceiver, correspond to the frog. Castelvetro, assuming that Dante meant to compare Ciampolo to the mouse, can find no correspondence at all. "Ora il Navarrese," he says, "non è punto simile al topo; ingannò i demoni per avere minor pena, ed ottenne per inganno quello che desiderava. . . . Ora mostri Dante in che consista questa sua parità, se può." This mistake only brings out more clearly the correctness of the interpretation given above. Mr. Paget Toynbee falls into a similar error, it seems to me, when he suggests (*l. c.*) that Dante may have referred to a fable of the Marie de France group. The fact that in this group the mouse escapes is of no significance unless Dante means to compare Ciampolo to the mouse. The only version of the fable that I have seen in which the mouse practices deception is that given by Jacopo della Lana. I conclude, then, that whether it be close or not the comparison was understood by the old commentators as it was intended by Dante.

One more point may appropriately find a place in this paper. It concerns a little poem which has been ascribed to Dante, but which is of doubtful authorship, beginning:

Quando il consiglio degli augei si tenne.

In a paper read before the Modern Language Association of America in 1897² I briefly discussed the authorship of this poem, and

¹ Benvenuto says: "Ista duo vulgaria tantum significant quantum de praesenti, sed aliqui tusci dicunt *mo*, aliqui lombardi dicunt *issa*."

² *A Sonnet ascribed to Chiaro Davanzati and its Place in Fable Literature*, in *Publications of the Mod. Lang. Assoc. of Am.*, Vol. XIII, 1898.

attempted to show its place in fable literature, it being a version of the fable of the Borrowed Feathers. Since then my attention has been called to an article, which I had unfortunately not seen, by Salvatore Concato, — *Il sonetto rinterzato "Quando il consiglio" di Dante* (in *Propugnatore*, XX, 2 (1887), 297-317). This article discusses with more detail what I treated briefly, and arrives at the conclusion that the poem was written by Dante, — a conclusion that I myself see no sufficient reason for rejecting, although it cannot be regarded as absolutely certain. Concato then notes that the fable as told in the Italian poem differs greatly from the versions that descend from Phaedrus, and resembles rather the Greek versions, such as that of Babrius; but, he continues, "pensare ad una affinità tra le due favole non è possibile." In my article I have shown, however, that this is very decidedly possible, — not, to be sure, by direct knowledge of the Greek fable, but through the medium of popular tradition. We find in mediæval literature many scattered versions of the Borrowed Feathers which cannot have come from the Phaedrus-Romulus collections, and which show that from ancient times the fable in its Greek form was current orally among the people in various parts of Europe. This is the most plausible explanation of the sonnet of the Borrowed Feathers by Chiaro Davanzati, "Di penne di paone e d'altre assai," and also, if it really belong to the time of Dante, "Quando il consiglio." It may be suggested that Dante might have known the Frog and the Mouse in the same way, but there are several reasons against this supposition. His reference to the Cock and the Pearl shows that he knew Romulus, or at least one of the collections descended from it; the Frog and the Mouse, as contained in these collections, is sufficient to explain his reference in *Inf.*, xxiii; and finally in the case of this fable we do not have mediæval versions which distinctly correspond to the Greek as opposed to Romulus.

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